

Wolverine

Description:

Like grizzly bears and wolves, wolverines symbolize wilderness. Also known as the 'skunk bear', they are the largest land-dwelling member of the weasel family. They are active throughout the year even in the most severe weather.

Shaggy Weasels?

Wolverines are the largest members of the weasel family that live on land. They somewhat resemble a bear cub in size but are longer and more squat. Females are at least ten percent shorter than males and weigh about 30 percent less. Four-inch long guard hairs give wolverines a shaggy appearance and also hide their stout body, massive limbs and short tail. Black to dark brown fur with white to yellowish brown on the chest extends down the sides and back to the tail. Their head is large and ears are relatively small and rounded.

The only species that would possibly be confused with the wolverine is the American badger. However, the wolverine's body is much more solid, has lighter stripes down its sides, and much less distinct white stripes on the face, compared to the badger. Also, wolverines lope, and badgers have more of a trot. Additional relatives of the wolverine are weasels, fishers, mink, martens and otters.

Untouched Habitat

Wolverines are primarily found in alpine tundra and northern mountain forests, which are unaffected by human disturbance. They construct rough beds of grass or leaves in caves or rock crevices, in burrows made by other animals, or under a fallen tree. Occasionally, they nest under the snow.

Diet

Although largely meat eaters, wolverines have a diet that can include anything from berries to full-sized deer. They prey on mammals such as ground squirrels, beavers, and porcupines, and even consume eggs, fledglings, fish and a variety of roots and berries. They can also be classified as scavengers since carrion, especially ungulate carcasses, comprise a large percentage of their diet.

Predators

Humans are responsible for the majority of wolverine deaths mostly because of trapping. In the United States, wolverines can only be harvested in Alaska and Montana. Providing protection for reproductive denning habitat is an important step towards wolverine conservation. Snowmobiles and increased interest in winter recreation may displace wolverine from denning habitat.

Although they are certainly capable of defending themselves on most occasions, wolverines are still relatively small animals in comparison with other large predators such as bears, wolves, and mountain lions. In encounters with such predators, the wolverine will occasionally be killed. Other causes of death are starvation and predation, especially when wolverines become old and not as able to travel and find food.

Adaptations

Wolverines are extremely strong and aggressive for their size, and have been reported to drive bears, cougars, and even packs of wolves from their kills. Their short and stocky legs allow the wolverine to move quickly when on the attack by reaching speeds of over 30 miles an hour. They are also equipped with large claws and pads on the feet which allow them to climb trees and chase down prey in deep snow.

Territories are marked with secretions from anal scent glands and urine. Wolverine also spray their food caches with scent gland secretions to discourage other animals from raiding them. Wolverine can break into canned goods with their sharp canines. They have a keen sense of smell and hearing but fairly poor eyesight.

Solitary and Territorial

Breeding usually occurs between May and August, but wolverines are so sparsely distributed it is often difficult for them to find a mate. On average, two to five young, called kits, are born in a litter. Females hide with their young after they give birth. She is responsible for defending her own territory until the young are ready to hunt on their own. Since wolverines are solitary and territorial, intruders of any kind are not tolerated, especially individuals of the same sex. The young reach adult size after about one year.

Northern Ranges

Wolverines have been nearly eliminated in the United States and have disappeared over much of southeastern and south-central Canada. Presently, they can only be found in the northern parts of both hemispheres. In North America, they occupy remote habitats from the high mountainous interior of the Rockies to the arctic coastal tundra and are extensions of Canadian populations. Idaho and Montana are the only states to report known populations of wolverines.



Wolverine
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Footprint
No Map
Distribution Map

1. **Species:** Wolverine
2. **Scientific Name:** *Gulo gulo*
3. **Population:**
4. **Size:** Weight: 35 to 60 lbs.
Length: (body) - 23- 26 inches.
Length: (tail) - 7-10 inches.
5. **Diet:** Small to large mammals, eggs, fledglings, fish, roots, and berries.
6. **Young:** 2-5 every two years; called kits.
7. **Lifespan:** 8-10 years.
8. **Taxonomy:** Kingdom: Animalia
Phylum: Chordata
Class: Mammalia
Order: Carnivora
Family: Mustelidae
9. **Hunted In Idaho:** No
10. **Hunting Link:**